



VIOLENT EXTREMISM FAR FROM THE END

Increased attacks, beheadings of civilians and complaints from the population about the poor performance of Mozambican forces threaten stability

- It has been months since violent extremists carried out attacks against civilians in Cabo Delgado. There were no reports of people being beheaded. The few incursions were made with the aim of looting foodstuffs from villages and agricultural fields. It was believed that the violent extremists were cornered and hungry, so they were releasing hostages¹.



¹ <https://visao.sapo.pt/atualidade/mundo/2022-05-11-mocambique-ataques-libertados-pelos-rebeldes-revelam-fome-dentro-da-insurgencia/>



The first signs of apparent safety prompted local authorities to mobilise displaced populations to return to their areas of origin². Some district administrations, such as those of Mocímboa da Praia, Muidumbe and Quissanga, went as far as to threaten civil servants who did not present themselves at their respective posts with punitive measures³.

Faced with the pressure from the local authorities, humanitarian agencies, such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), have warned that it is still premature to encourage displaced people to return to their areas of origin, recalling that the return of populations should be safe, voluntary and conducted with dignity and based on an informed decision⁴.

The triumphalist discourse would be taken up again by the Mozambican authorities, this time by the General Commander of the PRM, when on 13 May he said that the fight against violent extremism was nearing its end. "The war is harder, more difficult, when it comes to an end, when

it is almost at an end. We are not saying that we have reached the end, but it is almost over," said Bernardino Rafael⁵.

But on the ground the reality is different. The violent extremists are intensifying their attacks in Cabo Delgado, especially in the districts of Macomia and Nangade. If before the attacks were launched with the aim of stealing foodstuffs, reports in recent weeks show that violent extremists have resumed the beheading of civilians. At least 10 people have been beheaded and others kidnapped in several attacks, mainly in Macomia and Nangade⁶.

In fact, the security authorities of Cabo Delgado confirmed this Tuesday to the press the occurrence of attacks during the last week, including beheadings and kidnapping of civilians. "On Friday, 20 May, they crossed National Road No. 380 (the only road linking the capital Pemba to the district of Palma, in the far north of Cabo Delgado) and kidnapped some ladies and beheaded three citizens in the crops. They then

² <https://cddmoz.org/governo-reconhece-falta-de-condicoes-para-o-retorno-seguro-das-familias-a-vila-da-mocimboa-da-praia-2/>
³ <https://cddmoz.org/autoridades-da-mocimboa-da-praia-voltam-a-ameacar-funcionarios-para-regressarem-a-vila-no-dia-15-de-maio-2/>
⁴ <https://www.cartamz.com/index.php/politica/item/10261-acnur-considera-prematuro-regresso-dos-deslocados-as-suas-aldeias>
⁵ <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/mo%C3%A7ambique-guerra-contra-o-terrorismo-est%C3%A1-quase-a-chegar-ao-fim/a-61794671>
⁶ <https://www.voaportugues.com/a/cabo-delgado-dez-pessoas-decapitadas-e-outras-raptadas-numa-s%C3%A9rie-de-ataques-de-insurgentes/6586830.html>



moved on to other fields where they beheaded other people,” said the Commander of PRM in Cabo Delgado province, Vicente Chicote.

Still in Macomia district, but already on Sunday 22 May, the violent extremists entered the village of Chicomo, where they exchanged fire with the local force made up mostly of National Liberation Struggle combatants. “They set fire to some houses and went to hide in the woods. They returned to the same place and again there were clashes with the local force and now they are dispersed.”

Besides Macomia, the violent extremists attacked the headquarters of the administrative post of Olumbe, in Palma district, where they looted food from houses and shops⁷. Olumbe is a few dozen kilometres from Afungi, the epicentre of the liquefied natural gas project led by French oil company TotalEnergies, suspended since April 2021 after the brutal attack on the village of Palma in March last year⁸.

This week, consultancy Eurasia ruled that oil companies are unlikely to resume work in Cabo Delgado in the next 12 months due to persistent

insecurity and reorganisation of violent extremists. “The potential for Islamic State to provide funding and resources to the insurgents and the possible arrival of reinforcements from Tanzania will likely strengthen the insurgency, making the resumption of the liquefied natural gas exploration project in the next 12 years unlikely”⁹.

In addition to the intensification of attacks and resumption of beheading of civilians by violent extremists, human rights abuses by the Defence and Security Forces also appear to have resumed. If they ever stopped at all. A fortnight ago, the General Commander of the PRM was confronted with complaints from the population of the town of Macomia about the poor performance of some officers of the Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR) deployed in that district headquarters. The complainants spoke of physical aggression and extortion against defenceless civilians¹⁰.

Three weeks ago, the press reported the kidnapping of two economic agents in the main town of Macomia by UIR elements, who alleged that the traders had links with violent extremist groups. However, the UIR agents did not take

⁷ <https://cartamz.com/index.php/politica/item/10743-terroristas-voltam-a-atacar-palma-e-macomia>

⁸ https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Um-ano-depois-do-ataque-brutal-a-vila-de-Palma_seguranca-continua-critica-e-ainda-nao-ha-data-para-a-retoma-do-projeto-de-gas-da-TotalEnergies.pdf

⁹ <https://observador.pt/2022/05/23/reorganizacao-dos-terroristas-torna-improvavel-regresso-das-petroliferas-ate-2023-em-mocambique/>

¹⁰ <https://www.rm.co.mz/index.php/component/k2/item/21658-cabo-delgado-populacao-contra-ma-actuacao-de-alguns-elementos-da-policia-em-macomia.html>

the two “suspects” to the local police station for the opening of an investigative process, much less to the judicial authorities¹¹.

In reaction, Bernardino Rafael promised to take measures, including the transfer of the UIR force from the village to a position close to the fighting line. On Wednesday 25 May, Mozambican newspaper Notícias reported that a team of PRM inspectors has been sent to Cabo Delgado to investigate complaints of ill-treatment of civilians by members of the Rapid Intervention Unit in the districts affected by violent extremism, especially Macomia.

This is the first time that the security authorities take seriously complaints of human rights violations perpetrated by agents of the Defence and Security Forces in Cabo Delgado. Several

civil society organizations¹², international agencies¹³ and cooperation partners¹⁴ have already denounced human rights violations in Cabo Delgado, but the Government has never admitted such practices.

The recent complaints of the population of Macomia show once again that in many cases the actions of the Mozambican Defence and Security Forces have not contributed to the re-establishment of security and trust, but have exacerbated tensions in local communities due to serious human rights violations. This explains in part why the communities affected by the conflict feel safer with foreign forces, particularly the Rwandan military, than with the Mozambican Defence and Security Forces.

¹¹ <https://cartamz.com/index.php/sociedade/item/10595-fds-acusadas-de-raptar-dois-comerciantes-locais-em-macomia>

¹² <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Relat%C3%B3rio-reporta-graves-viol%C3%A7%C3%B5es-de-direitos-humanos-no-contexto-da-viol%C3%A2ncia-armada-em-Cabo-Delgado.pdf>

¹³ <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COMETIDAS-PELAS-FDS-EM-CABO-DELGADO-Governo-rejeita-pedido-da-Amnistia-Internacional-para-investigar-suspeitas-de-viol%C3%A7%C3%B5es-de-direitos-humanos.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://cddmoz.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/DIREITOS-HUMANOS-EM-MOCAMBIQUE-EUA-apontam-graves-violacoes-de-direitos-humanos-e-lamentam-falta-de-investigacao-dos-casos-reportados.pdf>



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